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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 000291

SIPDIS

FOR WHA/PDA, IIP/G/WHA, AND IIP/T/ES
FOR PM, NEA/NGA, WHA/PPC, AND WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON ELECTIONS IN IRAQ, FEBRUARY 7,
2005

1. Editorial in San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "La Prensa" on 2/6, titled "The Day After." "Last weekend's elections in Iraq represented a great relief for the international community, especially for the U.S. government, whose president counted on the free will of the Iraqi people despite the increasing violence in the days before the elections. Votes and violence were the highlight of that historical day which should and must be the start of a better future for the distressed Iraqi people."

"For that reason, after the closing of the ballot boxes, the key question is what will happen the day after. Certainly Iraq is still many days away from achieving the consolidation of freedom and peace. The day after the elections is just a step on the path toward stability, which is not around the corner and can't be achieved on a strict timetable."

"As interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi said, the terrorists weren't defeated with the elections, they just lost a battle that will be the starting point and the defining moment for a final victory of the Iraqi people."

"Most of the EU countries that didn't believe in this election now have a historical responsibility to support the decision of the Iraqis. It may be easy to end a war, but it's difficult to consolidate peace on the basis of justice and liberty."

Palmer